

**Comments received to date on LSCom's proposed
Town of Acton Conservation Lands Memorial Bench Policy**

re Section	Question/Comment Received:	Response:
A. Purpose	From ConsCom: Why limit bench donation opportunities (a) at all, or (b) to those who have had a special connection to Acton's conservation lands?	<p>We believe Acton citizens would want us want to add comfort and enjoyment for visitors, but without introducing a "city park" look to our naturalized open spaces areas by suddenly having a large number of benches in our conservation lands.</p> <p>If the Town wishes to make more memorial and honorary opportunities available, we would respectfully suggest adding additional <i>categories</i> of gifts, such as trees (or bricks on town center sidewalks), and <i>then</i> widening the base of donors who can participate in Acton's donor programs.</p>
B. What may be donated	From ConsCom: Are only memorial benches allowed; ie, if someone wanted to donate a bench for the good of the conservation area in honor of someone still alive; or if an Eagle Scout wanted to build one, would there be allowance for that? Section B seems to say that it could be a bench for any reason (with or without a plaque) but the title seems to say it is just memorial benches being considered?	<p>As Section A (Purpose) indicates, the policy would provide a means of enabling "individuals and organizations to *honor or memorialize* current and former members of the Acton community..." (Section B just describes *what* may be donated.)</p> <p>The two "Surveys" provided of other Massachusetts towns' and nonprofit organizations' policies indicate that it is not uncommon for policies like this to include both opportunities to memorialize the dead and honor the living (the latter sometimes being referred to as "naming," commemoration or "honorary" opportunities), while nevertheless calling them "Memorial" policies.</p> <p>We have initially focused on benches, since that is what citizens have approached us about in recent years.</p> <p>We have not considered the Eagle Scout question. Acton's Conservation Lands often have higher priority needs which Eagle Scouts are encouraged to address.</p>
C. Placement	From ConsCom: There was some discussion of what the "carrying capacity" is of various lands for benches, assuming this would ever even really be an issue. Personally I think that the language in Section C is good enough...	<p>Thank you; we agree. A brightline rule such as "x benches per linear foot or acre" really doesn't make sense. We respectfully note that Land Stewards and staff members of the Natural Resources Dept. spend a lot of time on each of the trails year round. We have a good sense of the aesthetic, ecological, habitat and other factors that should be considered.</p>

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F. Cost	<p>From ConsCom: The line at the bottom says that Sections 2a, 2b and 2c depend on style of bench; but really, I assume the cost of maintenance or other allocable costs would relate to bench style as well.</p>	<p>Because of the materials/bench models LSCom and the Natural Resources Dept. have discussed using and the Town's narrow maintenance undertaking in Section H, we don't think maintenance and "other allocable costs" (e.g., insurance) will differ much based upon bench style. However, the proposed policy does contemplate seeking input from someone in finance or accounting for the estimates described in Section F, items 2c, 2d and 2e, at least annually. Thus, we will have the benefit of those estimates when a prospective donor makes an inquiry or fills out paperwork.</p>
G. Administrative Procedure	<p>From Natural Resources Dept.: Should there be a \$25 application fee given (a) the administrative hassle involved in collecting it, and (b) the overall high cost associated with donating the bench?</p> <p>Who should review the application and approve or deny it? Just the Natural Resources Director, or LSCom and the Natural Resources Director, jointly?</p> <p>Should there be a dedicated conservation land maintenance account for all payments related to benches (donations and expenses)?</p> <p>Should the cost of the bench be paid by the Town or be paid to the supplier directly by the donor?</p>	<p>This is ultimately a policy decision for the Town. However, we note that (a) the Town manages to collect even lower fees (and even amounts below \$1 for copying) on a regular basis; (b) as noted in the two "Surveys" provided, Acton would not be alone in charging a \$25 application fee; and (c) even with the fee, our donated benches can still end up being a bargain relative to other towns' and organizations'.</p> <p>The proposed policy contemplates *joint* consideration of bench placement and of review and approval of applications, deliberation regarding which would take place in public meetings of LSCom, all in keeping with the principles of fairness and transparency, as well as to facilitate the coordination of "next steps" between Land Stewards and the Natural Resources Dept.</p> <p>This is a policy matter for the Town to decide; the proposed Bench Policy is silent on this point. LSCom would be delighted to have funds in excess of costs incurred in connection with the bench donation program augment our modest budget, but we have not made it an element of our proposal.</p> <p>It seems appropriate to ask each donor make a single donation for the total amount of the costs described in Section F, #2 a through e; have that donation submitted for acceptance by the Town through normal channels; and then, upon acceptance, have the Natural Resources Dept. order the bench through customary procedures. We do not recommend fragmenting donors' tax-deductible gifts into multiple pieces; or calling any portion of them "installation fees" (or anything else that directly corresponds to the components of Section F, #2 and might, as a result, end up not being tax-deductible). Nor do we recommend having</p>

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		donors order benches themselves, since the Town will be accepting delivery (most likely at the Cemetery Dept. on Concord Rd.) and either LSCo or Town Staff will handle installation.
H. Maintenance and replacement	From ConsCom: Would like to see the language in the 2 nd bullet point broadened beyond "stolen benches."	We are open to revising the language but are not clear as to what is not already covered by that bullet point and the one immediately following it. Please advise.
OTHER:	From ConsCom: I assume the issue of what other Commission/Boards may have approval oversight on various land-types is being addressed separately. Should the entire Policy be posted on the Town's website?	We await clarification as to the issue of which Acton conservation lands are under ConsCom's purview and which ones are not, and under whose authority those other ones are, from sources not yet identified. Many Towns and organizations post only a brief summary, often using "marketing language" that corresponds to the fund-raising objectives of their similar donation programs. LSCo's proposed policy contemplates that "Literature and forms describing Acton's bench donation program will include the salient elements of this Policy and the following statement: "The Town of Acton does not accept responsibility for any unauthorized benches, or for the purchase, placement, maintenance, etc. of benches other than in compliance with its internal policies and procedures." Whether or not the bench policy itself is posted in its entirety for the perusal of everyone on the internet, it makes sense to provide a "blurb" about the policy on several pages of the Town's website, including ConsCom's and LSCo's pages, with links to a summary, the Application, and Order Forms and photos of the three bench styles, and a contact phone # and email address for further information.

A proposed **Application** form and **photos/specs on proposed benches** are attached.

[TOWN SEAL]

Town of Acton Bench Donation Application

[address]

[Phone]

[Website]

APPLICATION FEE: \$25.00

Received by: _____

Name of Applicant: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Home

Cell

Email: _____

Name of Honoree: _____

Honoree's Connections to Acton's Conservation Lands: _____

Location (Conservation Land) requested:

First Choice: _____ Second Choice: _____

Preferred type of bench:

-----wood -----stone -----recycled milk bottle

If there's a Plaque or Engraving, what do you want it to say?

Today's date: _____

For Town Use Only:

Approved / Denied /

Approved with changes: _____ Date: _____

(circle one)

Conservation Director

Date: _____

LSCom Officer

Comments: _____

Prospective Donor Contacted: _____

By

Date

The Town of Acton does not accept responsibility for any unauthorized benches, or for the purchase, placement, maintenance, etc. of benches other than in compliance with its internal policies or procedures.

RECYCLED PLASTIC



www.ConversionProducts.com

Repose Garden Memorial Bench 46"x36"

Our Garden Memorial Bench, made from recycled plastic milk jugs, is a traditional English garden bench design that transforms into a lovely Memorial Bench. Wide contoured seat and slightly raked back provide comfort while the heavy legs and frame provide strength and durability. May be ordered with 12" additional extra long legs for securing into concrete.

\$490 including memorial plaque

Shipping **\$40.00**

All CPI memorial benches are **provided with a 3x5" memorial plaque** that allows ample space for an honoree name and memorial message. Our products are proudly provided with an 8-year manufacturer's warranty.

WOOD

COUNTRY CASUAL[®]

Teak Garden Furnishings



Country Casual

4 Foot Windermere memorial bench item #4501 \$575.00

Shipping \$51.75

2"x8" Brass plaque: 1-2 lines item #1050 \$68.00;

or 3-4 lines item #1051 \$75.00

STONE

Seeking a supplier for a bench similar to this one:



Solely for purposes of estimated costs and specs (we feel the engraving is too intrusive):

Swenson Granite Works, Medway

Likely these benches would be sited near parking lots where delivery is more accessible for Shawn's crew (legs each weigh 100 lbs.; top weighs about 250 lbs).

Woodbury Gray Classic Tree Style Bench With Engraving

Dimensions: 48" long x 14" deep x 4" thick

\$365 for the bench (and legs); \$195 delivery to Acton from Medway, MA

Engraving: \$99 for the 1st 4 characters (e.g., date) then \$7.25 per 2" letter or \$17 per 4" letter

